

CARNAHAN CALLS ON PRESIDENT TO SIGN BILL

(WASHINGTON, DC) -- Congressman Russ Carnahan (MO-3) voted in support of H.R. 976, the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2007, which passed the full House today.

In 2004, at his acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention, President Bush declared, "America's children must have a healthy start in life... In a new term, we will lead an aggressive effort to enroll millions of poor children who are eligible but not signed up for government health insurance programs." □ And yet now, in 2007, President Bush has threatened to veto a bill that does just that – enroll millions of low-income children who are eligible but not signed up for CHIP and Medicaid. □

"This bill passed the House and will pass the Senate with a large number of bipartisan votes," Carnahan said. □ "President Bush has consistently vetoed and threatened to veto bills which have had overwhelming public support. □ A veto of this legislation would be unconscionable, and I urge President Bush to do the right thing for our children by signing this responsible bill into law."

Since its creation 10 years ago, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) has consistently received broad bipartisan support. CHIP has been proven to be a popular, successful program, with 6.6 million children currently enrolled.

CHIP expires on September 30, meaning millions of low income children would lose their health insurance without Congressional intervention. H.R. 976 invests \$35 billion in additional funding in children's health insurance over five years.

"Insuring every American child is an achievable and affordable goal, and H.R. 976 takes aggressive steps to meet this goal," Carnahan said. □ "Under this legislation, 56,900 uninsured children will gain coverage in my home state of Missouri."

This is the second time the House has passed legislation to reauthorize funds for children's health insurance this year, as the House passed the Children's Health and Medicare Protection

(CHAMP) Act in August. Since then, a bipartisan group of Senators and House Members created H.R. 976 with the goal of providing states with the necessary tools to enroll more eligible low-income children.

H.R. 976 renews and improves the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), providing health care coverage for more than 10 million children -- preserving coverage for the 6.6 million currently covered by CHIP and extending coverage to 3.8 million children who are currently uninsured, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO).

The bill provides health insurance for the additional children by focusing on enrolling the lowest income eligible children first. CHIP's focus is returned to low-income children, phasing out coverage of adults. It also includes an enhanced premium assistance provision to help families buy into employer coverage for children if available to them.

This legislation is supported by 68 Senators, including 18 Republicans, 43 Governors, including 16 Republicans, and a majority of the American people.